

**TOWN OF BELMONT  
PLANNING BOARD**

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**MEETING MINUTES  
April 28, 2015**

2015 SEP 22 PM 2:58

Present: Michael Battista, Chair; Elisabeth Allison, Vice Chair (arrived at 8:00 pm); Joseph DeStefano; Karl Haglund, Barbara Fiacco (Associate Member), Jeffrey Wheeler, Office of Community Development

**7:10 p.m. Meeting called to order**

**1. Special Permit Public Hearing: Alter Non-Conforming Structure**

➤ **15-04 35-37 Harvard Road - Enlarge the Front Entry and Rear Porch**

Mr. Battista read the Notice of Public Hearing.

Collin Smith, the architect for this project, explained that this house was built before zoning existed, which is why it is not in compliance. The applicant feels these changes will make the home safer, more energy efficient and bring it to code compliance. The applicant proposes to:

- enlarge the front entry and rear porch
- create a common vestibule
- rebuild the existing three season porch as stairs
- add a new roof over the stoop
- add a master bath
- add a hipped roof

Mr. Haglund commented that simplification on the front pathway is an improvement to the neighborhood and is well thought out.

Mr. Battista hoped that the new staircase to the basement would not result in the creation of additional living space, and would like this to be a condition before approval is granted. He added that the Board struggles with a decision that would increase the non-conformity of a structure and further added that he did not want to be in the position of having to defend the decisions of the Board to future applicants as to why one applicant was granted relief and another was not.

Mr. DeStefano felt that the privacy afforded by two separate entrances added value to a home. He also felt that making a common vestibule as opposed to keeping the perfectly balanced separate entrances created an aesthetical imbalance.

The applicant commented that the basement would only be used for storage, and that the other changes to the front door would provide easier access for the elderly residents living there. He also cited safety issues as a reason to grant the proposed changes. Mr. Haglund suggested that perhaps the steps alone could be reconfigured. Ms. Fiacco commented that using the reason of "safety" to justify expansion made her uncomfortable. Mr. DeStefano suggested expanding

the landing three feet instead of creating a vestibule, and suggested that he would rather see the applicant do this.

Mr. Battista stated that the Board would not vote on this matter tonight, and urged the applicant and his architect to re-do the plans without expanding the footprint. In order to save time, Mr. Smith requested that the matter be split and the Board vote only on the back porch piece this evening. However, the Board agreed to continue the matter.

**Moved by Ms. Fiacco to continue this public hearing to May 5, 2015 at 7:00 pm in the Board of Selectman's Room. Seconded by Mr. DeStefano. Motion passed.**

## **2. Preparation for Town Meeting**

- **Review Zoning Forum and Warrant Briefing**

The Board discussed these events and felt that the zoning amendment had received a positive reception.

- **Potential Amendments to Warrant Articles**

The Board discussed the wording of the amendment to be presented at Town Meeting and offered suggestions, and also discussed the 25% lot coverage vs. the 30% lot coverage requirement and the 1.6 rule. Mr. DeStefano stated the 1.6 rule and the 25% rule work together to prevent building boxcar like structures, and developers are going to see they cannot build a house large enough on a lot that would be profitable. Also, these rules encourage development of single family homes. Ms. Allison suggested replacing the word "attractive" with "desirable"; and changing other wording to "more aesthetically desirable property". Mr. Haglund suggested using the wording "proportionally consistent with the character of the neighborhood." Mr. Battista commented that these rules would rectify the unintended consequences of past zoning amendments.

**Moved by Ms. Fiacco to recommend Town Meeting adopt this amendment. Seconded by Ms. Allison. Motion passed.**

- **Presentation**

The Board suggested wording changes to the presentation of the new zoning amendment, while Jeffrey Wheeler did the editing on his laptop.

**Adjourn: 9:15 pm**